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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP STUDY SHOWS DOWNWARD TREND IN EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING

REF: A. A) 07BOGOTA4340  
[¶](#)B. B) 07BOGOTA8367  
[¶](#)C. C) BOGOTA1602

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer. Reason: 1.4(b,d)

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SUMMARY  
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[¶](#)1. (C) A June 9 report released by the well-known Colombian think tank/human rights group Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP) showed a marked fall in alleged extrajudicial killings in the latter part of 2007. CINEP director Mauricio Garcia Duran told us it is too early to determine if the data marks a trend, but noted the decline coincides with recent Ministry of Defense (MOD) initiatives to address the problem. Army commander General Mario Montoya briefed the Ambassador on Army efforts to reduce extrajudicial killings, including a new directive tying the award of medals to captures rather than kills. The Ambassador welcomed the new directive, but stressed the need to ensure that policy directives translate into changes on the ground. End Summary.

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CINEP Reports Downward Trend in Extrajudicial Killings  
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[¶](#)2. (U) Well-known Colombian think tank/human rights group CINEP released a report on June 9 showing a fall in the number of alleged extrajudicial killings by Colombian security forces in the second half of 2007. In the first six months of 2007, CINEP identified 85 cases involving 150 victims; in the second half it recorded 47 cases with 87 victims. CINEP Director Mauricio Garcia Duran said it is too early to determine if the data marks an inflection point, but noted that the decline coincides with the Ministry of Defense's implementation of new measures to reduce such incidents, including the introduction of Directives 10 and 19 (refs A and B), new Rules of Engagement (ROEs), new training, and a renewed emphasis on operational law. CINEP does not yet have data for the first half of 2008.

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MOD Figures Also Show Downward Trend  
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[¶](#)3. (C) The committee set up by the MOD's Directive 10 and aimed at addressing extrajudicial killings has already met ten times and has facilitated the transfer of cases to the civilian justice system and the strengthening of interagency communication on human rights cases (refs B and C). Military Inspector General Eduardo Behar told us the military's data shows there were 127 reported cases of extrajudicial killings

in 2006, 73 in 2007, and 28 through April, 2008. (Note: Some cases have multiple victims.) Army Commander General Mario Montoya affirmed that overall human rights complaints fell in 2007 despite a 20% increase in military operations -- signaling that the implementation and training on new directives and the MOD's Integrated Policy on Human Rights are working.

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General Montoya Underscores MOD Commitment on Human Rights

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¶4. (C) General Montoya briefed the Ambassador on June 18 on the Army's commitment to human rights, transparency, the rule of law, and working with civilian and international institutions. Montoya reviewed Army actions over the last year to improve human rights including: 1) his monthly meetings with the inspector delegates assigned to each division to review human rights concerns, disciplinary issues, etc; 2) assignment to date of 51 operational lawyers to act as legal advisors to divisional, brigade and battalion commanders; 3) creation of judicial coordination offices in all divisions and brigades to receive and investigate complaints and to coordinate with the Prosecutor General's Office; 4) enhancing the stature of the Army's Human Rights directorate; and 5) development of an operations manual to ensure Army compliance with ROEs and international humanitarian law.

¶5. (C) Montoya also stressed the Army's strong cooperation with the UN High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR) and the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He said UNHCHR officials are conducting their third round of visits to the Army's seven divisions to meet with commanders on human rights issues and review alleged cases of extrajudicial killings. Montoya added that on May 14, 2008, the MOD issued Directive 0542 which links the award of medals and other benefits to demobilizations captures, and the consolidation of territorial control rather than combat kills. The Ambassador welcomed the Army's efforts, but stressed that need to translate policy directive into changes on the ground. He also urged the Army to recognize and respect the important work done by human rights groups.

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UNHCHR: More Needs to be Done

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¶6. (C) Local UNHCHR office head Javier Hernandez said his group has not detected the same downward trend reported by CINEP. The UNHCHR registered 75 alleged victims in the first part of 2007, compared with 71 in the second half of the year. Hernandez recognized progress at the doctrinal level in reducing extrajudicial killings, but said more needs to be done to implement these changes in the field. Hernandez praised Luz Marina Gil, the civilian head of the Military Justice system, for improving the process for transferring cases from military to civilian systems. The ICRC said the Colombian military's human rights performance has improved sharply, but agreed extrajudicial killings remain an issue. The ICRC dismissed some human rights groups' claims that any increase in extrajudicial killings is linked to the paramilitary demobilization, attributing most such killings to the rapid increase in the security force's size as well as the heightened operational pace. The ICRC said there is no evidence to support the notion that such killings are systematic or ordered by senior commanders.

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